David N. Bell (1943-2025)

With a sadness reverberating around Newfoundland—through the thousands of students he taught at Memorial University and myriads of karatekas from his dojos—his wife, Terryl N. Kinder, announces the death of her beloved husband, David Neil Bell, on March 18.

He also leaves behind in England his niece, Abi Searle-Jones (Simon Letherland) and their two children, nephews Andrew Searle-Jones (Helen) and their three children, and Stuart Jones (Lucy) and their three sons.

Born in a medieval house in the shadow of Durham cathedral on June 2, 1943, David graduated from Leeds University in 1964 and studied at the Oriental Institute at Princeton before switching from sociology (Japanese Population statistics in the early modern period) to the study of religions at Oxford, where he graduated with a D.Phil. in 1971. Offered a teaching position in 1970 when MUN was expanding, he accepted a two-year contract but fell in love with The Rock, never left it in spirit, and always thought of it as home. His 34 books and hundreds of articles are witness to his prolific scholarly life, as was his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

While it may seem incongruous to some, Dr. David N. Bell was quite literally the voice of Newfoundland to the many scholars and students who heard his lectures at academic conferences and university settings in Europe, Canada, and the USA, and he was never anything short of laudatory about his adopted home.

His love of cats is well known to everyone who knew him. In lieu of flowers, it would please him to know that you made a donation to your favorite animal shelter—or adopted one!

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 22 at 11 am (local time) at the Anglican Cathedral of St John the Baptist in St John’s where David was senior deacon. The service will be live-streamed on the Cathedral's Facebook page and YouTube channel; the links can be found at https://www.ourcathedral.ca/worship/ (the link will go live when the service begins).